

Learn how to act around animals.

Biofacts (Props)

- recognizable pelt (such as lion or tiger)
- turtle shell showing bones
- crocodile skull to show teeth

Tip: Number and type of biofacts (props) will depend on age of audience (younger the crowd, less complex the biofacts) and the specific animals being brought. Generally with young children, the fewer the better and only take ones that relate directly to your talk. All they will really care about are the animals!

Living Material

- Take 3 or 4 animals.
- Take animals with different textures. Talk about the textures (the hedgehog feels like a hairbrush, the bearded dragon feels like sandpaper, etc.)
- Take only touchable animals. They are too young to understand why they can touch some but not others.

Objectives

General Tips

Preschoolers have short attention spans and cannot sit still for very long. Keep each segment of your talk short and involve the children by using songs or finger plays, asking them questions, having them stand up to show the length of an adult alligator, etc. Don't talk much about things that they can't see. Keep your explanations simple and don't use many big words (but make a big deal about the big words you do use – they'll get a kick out of learning "nocturnal" or "omnivore"). Whenever you can, relate what you are telling them about the animal to themselves ("Alligators have 4 legs and 1 tail – how many legs do you have? How many tails do you have")?

Possible Talk Outline

1. How do you act around animals?
 - a. Wild: Enjoy watching them, but don't try to catch or chase them. If you come across an injured animal, don't touch it – find an adult.
 - b. Pets: Ask both the pet's owner and your parent (or whatever adult you are with) before petting.
2. The rules for the docent animals.
 - a. No talking (or very quiet, inside voices). Loud noises will scare animals.
 - b. Two-finger touches. Also emphasize "soft" touches to reinforce no poking.
 - c. Pet from behind the head to the tail.
 - d. Never touch near head – ANYTHING WITH A MOUTH CAN BITE.

3. Present animals.
 - a. Give basic information and cool facts.
 - b. Be brief.
 - c. Ask questions and expand on the knowledge they already have. EXAMPLE: “What is this animal?” “What can you tell me about rabbits (or whatever)?” “That’s right! They eat carrots. What else do you think they eat?”
 - d. Either take animals around to be touched quickly (as you will lose the group while they wait), or talk about all of the animals first and let them pet later while more than one animal gets taken around at a time.
 - e. Before introducing each animal (before the kids even see it), do a finger play or song or remind kids of a story or cartoon character that involves that species. There are numerous choices, but here are a few suggestions (all of these songs & finger plays are in the binder on the docent desk).

Docent Animal	Songs &/or Finger Plays	Stories
Alligators	Five Little Monkeys On The Back Of A Crocodile	
Hedgehog		<i>Alice In Wonderland</i> <i>Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle</i> <i>The Mitten</i>
Snakes	Sneaky Snake	
Turtles	There Was A Little Turtle My Turtle	<i>The Tortoise and the Hare</i>
Tree Frog	Ten Little Froggies Five Little Speckled Frogs There Once Was A Green Little Frog, Frog, Frog	
Rabbits		<i>The Tortoise and the Hare</i> Bugs Bunny
Rats		In <i>Pocahontas</i> and in <i>An American Tale</i> you see rats (&/or mice) climbing the ropes to get on the ship.
Chicken		<i>The Little Red Hen</i> <i>Chicken Little</i>
Ducks	Six Little Ducks	<i>The Ugly Duckling</i> <i>Babe</i> – had the same kind of duck (the one that crows like a rooster)
Goats		<i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i>
Skink		
Flying Squirrels		
Bearded Dragon		
American Kestrel		
Galah Cockatoo		

Learn about animals from around the world.

Biofacts (Props) & Living Material

Continent	Docent Animals	Biofact animals
North America	California (Baja) rosy boa, California King Snake, Mexican Pine Snake	Wolf, deer, bobcat, eagle, alligator, bear, deer, otter, great horned owl
South America	Prehensile Tailed Porcupine, Colombian Red-tailed Boa, Chilean Rose-hair Tarantula, Short-Tailed Opossum, Cane Toad	Macaw, rhea, tapir, jaguar anteater, porcupine, toucan, scarlet ibis, sloth
Europe	Jacobin Pigeon, Ancona Duck, Miniature Horses, Miniature Donkeys	Reindeer, rabbit, duck
Asia	Prehensile-tailed skink	Tiger, python, leopard, binturong, sloth bear
Africa	Tenrec, Nigerian Dwarf Goat, Egyptian Tortoise, Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches, Kenyan Sand Boa, African Millipede, Brown House Snake	Lion, Zebra, ostrich, giraffe, antelope, cheetah, lemur, fruit bat, hyena, mandrill
Australia	New Guinea Blue-tongued Skink, Inland Bearded Dragon, White’s Tree Frog, Prehensile-Tailed Skink	Kangaroo, wallaby, coral, green sea turtle, cassowary
Domestic	Jacobin Pigeon, Domestic Rabbits, Norway Rat, Goats, Miniature Horses, Miniature Donkey, Guinea Pigs	Cow, pig, camel, bulldog

Objectives

1. Describe an object by saying how it is similar to or different from another object.
2. Describe how animals and plants sometimes cause changes in their surroundings.
3. Observe and identify different external features of plants and animals and describe how these features help them live in different environments.
4. Recognize and explain that living things are found almost everywhere in the world and that there are somewhat different kinds in different places.

General Tips

Take animals from several continents/biomes. Start at the head and move to the tail. Discuss where the animals live and what characteristics of the animal relates to that. Of course, it is appropriate to give a “thumbnail” sketch of each animal’s natural history or cool features.

Possible Talk Outline

1. Using the flannel board map and 2-3 animal cut-outs per continent, have the children place the animals on the continents where they originate. Can also use the blow-up globe.
2. Use animals from different continents that fill similar niches and compare them (example: ostrich and emu, tiger and mountain lion).
3. Using animals from the same continent, discuss how they are adapted to fit their specific niches. How are they similar and different?
4. Point out the adaptations on each of the docent animals as you show them, discussing how they relate to where the animal lives.

Explore the different ways animals move.

Biofacts (Props)

Stuffed loggerhead turtle (shows flippers)	Any feet, talons	Kite or “paratrooper” GI toy
Spring (illustrate how tendons work)	Shark in a jar	Paper airplane

Living Material

Rule of thumb: make sure to bring at least two different kinds of movers, a comparison between similar modes of movement is also recommended (i.e. two hoppers, two flyers, or a flyer and a glider).

Movement illustrated	Docent Animal
Jumping	Rabbit, White’s Tree Frog, Cane Toad
Swimming	White’s Tree Frog (tadpoles), Ancona Duck
Flying	Jacobin Pigeon
Climbing	Prehensile-tailed Porcupine, Prehensile-tailed Skink, Snakes*
Slithering	Baja Rosy Boa, Kenyan Sand Boa, California King Snake, Colombian Red-tailed Boa, Mexican Pine, Brown House
Crawling	Chilean Rose-haired Tarantula, Inland Bearded Dragon, Blue Tongued Skink
Ability to Retreat into External Protection	Egyptian Tortoise, Tenrec
Generalist	Norway Rat, Miniature Donkey and Horse, Madagascar Hissing Cockroach, Nigerian Dwarf Goat**, Short-Tailed Opossum

* None of our snakes are particularly arboreal, but most of the rat snakes (corns & kings) can climb.

** Can also be used to illustrate a different sort of climbing (leaping from rock to rock).

Objectives

1. Animals move in different ways.
2. The shape of an animal reflects its primary method of moving.
3. There are unique morphological traits that improve speed and efficiency (older groups).

General Tips

Start at the tail and move back and/ or the toes and move up. In general, we will be discussing how animals move and specific adaptations that enhance movement. Of course, it is appropriate to give a “thumbnail” sketch of each animal’s natural history or cool features.

Possible Talk Outline

1. What ways do animals move? (specifically from one point to another)

Have the kids answer this question, depending on size of group and location have several kids demo the types of movement.

Jumping	Running	Leaping	Digging	Swimming
Flying	Gliding	Climbing	Burrowing	Swinging
Walking	Crawling	Wiggling	Skipping	Slithering

Tip: If you bring a glider or flyer, ask the kids to demonstrate gliding or flying last. Use the fact that humans are not adapted to fly or glide as segue to discussing how animals move.

2. How are different parts used for movement?

For Example:

- Tail- Balance, swimming, gripping
- Toenails- Gripping, traction
- Feet- Whole foot can be lengthened for speed, or small for pivot, long toes for climbing, etc
- Legs- Large back legs for jumpers. Long legs for speed, (older groups you can get into tendons), etc

3. Illustrate adaptations for movement using biofacts and animals

Depends on the animals you have with you.

4. Illustrate similarities and differences between adaptations for movement in unrelated species.

P-T porcupine & Snakes	Gripping - pad on PT tail, scales on snakes
Toad & Rabbit	Powerful hind legs, relatively smaller front legs
Turtle, Fish, Dolphin, Alligator	Flattened fins, flippers, tails
Glider vs. Flyer	“Parachuting” vs. Muscular, powered flight

Note: Ask for other examples of jumpers: kangaroo, wallaby, kangaroo rat, etc. An alligator uses tail for swimming, not hind legs, hind legs for muddy bottom, depth control.

Glider vs. Flyer – flyer is able to gain altitude with wings, glider must climb, both use tails to slow descent and for stability - it may also act as a rudder